

Is holding of People's Tribunal illegal? After having a long drawn history of observing people's tribunal all over the world, the question arises due to the atrocious act of Kolkata police by slapping criminal charges against the activists for organizing the same in 2008. The background of the incident is that on 9-10th June 2008, Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) an established human rights organization working since 1997 against state atrocities and subsequent impunity; organized a people's tribunal on torture at Moulali, Kolkata. It was a part of a National Program named 'National Project on Preventing Torture in India'. Astonishingly, Kolkata Police initiated a criminal case against MASUM because of organizing such a democratic procedure. It was a blatant attack upon human rights movement and democratic endeavors.

Subsequently numbers of human rights organization came forward with solidarity to register their protest against this heinous act of police. Several civil society organization and individuals formed a platform named 'Ganashunanir Adhikar Raksha Mancha' to challenge the attack on right to hold public hearing.

In this course, on 25 of June 2010 at the auditorium of 'Sarat Sadan' at Howrah Maidan, the said platform organized a People's Convention as 'People's Tribunal; People's Right'.



Mr. Kirty Roy, Secretary of Masum, in his opening speech, remembered the black day of Indian democracy i.e. 25 June in the year 1975. On the very day internal emergency imposed upon the people of this country by the then central Government of India. According to him, it was the harshest attack upon Indian democracy and justified the day for holding such an event.

Numbers of victims of state atrocities were present at the convention. Five of them deposed their pathos before the audience. In this course Mr. Pradip Bala narrated BSF atrocities upon his family resulted his mother to commit suicide, Mr. Giyasuddin Mondal spoke about medieval torture upon him inflicted by policemen in Deganga police station, Mr. Daud Hussain Seikh informed the audience about custodial torture inflicted by policemen of Beldanga police station upon his brother; Hayat Seikh which resulted his death, he also spoke about the unholy nexus between police and medical professionals at the government hospitals, who refused to conduct an post mortem examination over the body, Mr. Kanai Mondal told the sordid saga of BSF torture and extra judicial killings by the BSF in bordering area of Murshidabad, lastly Jahiruddin made a vivid picture of rampant violations of role and procedures by law enforcing agencies at the bordering areas of Jalangi and Raninagar of Murshidabad. He also made reference about the scarcity of basic deliverances in the said area which is prompting the populace to involve in illegal smuggling, while actual operatives are people in power. Numbers of Human Rights activists including Mr. Malay Sengupta, Former Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court, Mr. Suhas Chakma; Executive Director of ACHR, Ms. Antara Debsen; Editor of 'The Little Magazine, Mr. Sujato Bhadra; an eminent activist of civil rights movement, Mr. Meher Engineer; Scientist and noted social worker, shared their experiences with the audience.



Jahiruddin Seikh alias Mithu addressing his last speech

Mr. Sujato Bhadra in his simple speech opined that there is no difference between the era of internal emergency and present scenario of West Bengal, as in both the case the voice of democracy has been throttled by state machinery and space for dissenting voices has been curbed. Ms. Debsen expressed her disappointment upon the activities of police administration and remarked that police should not be controlled by the instruction of political parties. Mr. Suhas Chakma in his oration challenged prevailing impunity and questioned the 'power to prosecute' extended to police and other forces. Mr. Meher Engineer strongly condemned the West Bengal government's atrocious act to gauge democratic voices. He also remarked that in various states he attended this kind of civil discourse without any hindrance.

The convention took a resolution that Police should immediately withdraw the criminal case against MASUM's activists. Mr. Justice Malay Sengupta spelt it out before the audience and house accepted the same, later he gave vote of thanks. The convention was conducted and facilitated by Mr. Basudeb Ghatak, Convener of 'Ganashunanir Adhikar Raksha Mancha'.

Though, the convention concluded with a good spirit but in an extremely shocking and horrible road accident near Khagraghat Station, Murshidabad, three lives were lost, while they were returning to their villages after participated in the convention. The deceased were Mr. Jiarul Seikh, Mr. Jahiruddin Seikh alias Mithu and Master Deep Mondal a nine years old child. 'Ganashunanir Adhikar Raksha Mancha' expressed their deepest grief over the incident.

